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Article

**Battered and Demoralized: A Survey of the Libyan Military
One Year After**

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Article

Battered and Demoralized:
A Survey of the Libyan Military
One Year After

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One year after the US air raids on Tripoli and Banghazi on 15 April 1986, Libya's Armed Forces have failed to improve significantly their capabilities. Although the raids initially helped focus the attention of Libya's military leaders on improving national defense, since November they have been forced to attend to their collapsing campaign in Chad. Tripoli continues to view the United States as a real and present danger, but it is a long way from making the best use of its sophisticated arsenal to meet the perceived threat.

State of Morale in Libya's Armed Forces
The already poor morale of the Libyan Armed Forces declined further after the 15 April airstrikes, Many officers were indicted for dereliction of duty in the air raids. Perhaps only a few were convicted—details are unavailable—but the trials almost certainly reinforced impressions among officers that they were being made scapegoats for the defeat. morale among Libyan servicemen was also suffering because of four months of nearly continuous alert. Desertion rates were high.

Morale is now at an alltime low as a result of the recent debacles in Chad, The rout of the Libyan Army by Chadian irregulars—with an estimated loss of 3,000 to 4,000 Libyans killed, wounded, and captured—is a humiliation that all of Libya's military services are likely to feel. Even more than before, Libyan servicemen are likely to distrust and blame their equipment, training, and leadership. Moreover, their feelings of being ill used by Qadhafi almost certainly will increase.

The impact of morale on combat performance, however, varies according to the scenario. When troops lack the will to stand and fight, few other military factors matter, as was shown when Ouadi Doum—Libya's largest garrison in Chad—fell to a numerically inferior and less well-armed Chadian force. The will to fight, however, is a changeable commodity. Libyan columns vigorously engaged a Chadian force near Faya Largeau just days before the Ouadi Doum debacle, according to reports from the defense attache in N'Djamena. Morale that is high enough to allow a Libyan commander to anticipate that his troops will follow orders in combat could be sparked by:

- A perception that they are fighting for their personal survival or for their homeland rather than for Qadhafi.
 - A perception that the enemy is easy prey.
 - The imposition of strict military discipline.
 - A visible victory by other Libyan units.
 - A commander who inspires confidence.
- Information is rarely available to weigh any of these factors in Libyan units, however, and morale will remain a potentially all-important wild card in future Libyan military confrontations.

We believe that generally poor morale at all levels of the Libyan Armed Forces has slowed the development of their military capabilities. Poor morale at the command and senior staff levels almost certainly has minimized initiative and creative thinking in contingency planning and force development. Enthusiasm for professional improvement below the staff level also generally appears to be missing, largely overwhelmed by an interest in self-preservation.

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Command Move to Jufrah

One of the most tangible measures prompted by the 15 April raids has been the movement of Libya's military headquarters from Tripoli 500 kilometers southeast to Jufrah. The move had been scheduled for the spring of 1985, but it was postponed because the isolated desert locale was unattractive to senior military leaders, [redacted]

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[redacted] After 15 April, Qadhafi insisted that Tripoli was too vulnerable and too decadent for the nation's military command. Command elements began moving to Jufrah in the summer of 1986. [redacted]

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[redacted] Jufrah now houses the senior commands of the Army, the Air Force, the Air Defense Force, and the Navy, as well as the interservice General Headquarters. Qadhafi himself has received official visitors there, [redacted] and Abu Bakr Yunis, commander in chief of the Libyan Armed Forces, keeps his office there. [redacted]

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The move to Jufrah appears to have been disruptive. Senior staffs uprooted from their home offices are bound to suffer at least a short period of inefficiency. In this case, the period seems to have been extended by the reluctance of commanders to spend more time than absolutely necessary at Jufrah and by the return of some staff officers to Tripoli for weekends with their families. [redacted]

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Coastal Defense Measures

A great deal of energy has been spent to little avail on enhancement of Libya's coastal defenses. Qadhafi raised the specter of an amphibious invasion to justify the mobilization of Libyan reservists early this year. Although we believe the primary reason for the mobilization was to augment Libya's forces in Chad, efforts were made at the same time to fortify the coast. [Redacted]

Outlook
Qadhafi is likely to continue to try to raise the specter of a US invasion as a rallying point for his military, probably with no better results than he has achieved in the last year. His credibility among the military, already low a year ago, almost certainly will decline further as word spreads of the disastrous results of his Chadian adventure. Particularly frustrating for him is the likelihood that he actually believes in the threat of an invasion. [Redacted]

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We anticipate that Qadhafi will make scapegoats of many senior Army and Air Force officers for the defeats in Chad. He is likely again to tout his notion that an armed populace must eventually replace the standing Army. This approach would compound the military's sense of humiliation and betrayal in Chad. [Redacted]

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Tripoli appears to be aware of the ramifications of low morale in the military, but it is making only cosmetic corrections. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] We doubt that these measures will placate the Chad veterans or ease the fears of servicemen that Qadhafi could send them into similar adventures elsewhere. Other longstanding irritants—particularly the general decline of pay, benefits, and prestige—have not been addressed. [REDACTED]

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Until morale is boosted, efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the Libyan forces through training or new equipment are unlikely to produce noteworthy results. Even with good morale, the pace of Libyan training would have to increase to unprecedented levels before we would anticipate markedly better performance than US forces encountered in the engagements in March and April of last year. Meanwhile, we doubt that morale can be improved quickly enough for Qadhafi to reverse his fortunes in Chad unless he sends his elite regime protection forces into combat, a measure he has so far been loath to take. [REDACTED]

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